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Ireland Under Lord De Gray - 1844

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The Right Hon

The Master of the Rolls.

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Author.

IRELAND UNDER LORD DE GREY.



IRELAND UNDER LORD DE GREY.

*"Non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora Poeni ;
"Nec tam aversus equos Tyria Sol jungit ab urbe."*

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IRELAND UNDER LORD DE GREY.

ON the thirtieth of August, 1841, Sir Robert Peel accepted the office of Prime Minister; and now, for more than two years, Ireland, with the rest of the empire, has been under his controul. After such a period, rendered remarkable by the existence in this country of a most extensive and organized confederacy, for the purpose of overthrowing the great international compact of 1800, and still in the presence of an agitation unshaken in its hostility to an united realm, a tempting opportunity offers for reviewing the political condition of this country.

Heretofore, in judging of the conduct of government in Ireland, the habit has been either unsparingly to condemn, or lavishly to praise, according as it suited the taste or the interest of the few who at all troubled themselves about our affairs. Whenever a vile purpose was to be carried, the hireling who undertook the office, whether he was the tool of faction, or the sycophant of power,

little regarded the means by which his end was accomplished ; and our political writers, such as they were, cared not from what arsenals their artillery was drawn, provided that it sounded sufficiently of terror or discontent. Hence we see a government of this day confounded, without any affectation of apology, with a government of a century gone by, and the designs of public men are judged, not out of their own acts and mouths, but by the words and deeds of their supposed political ancestors. The country, too, is unfortunately treated after the same fashion, not as she is, but as she might have been, had other men in other times pursued wiser courses ; and the annals of the past are searched under various pretexts, by those who carry their own selfish designs in perpetuating hatred and ill will amongst our countrymen. No writer who hopes to see the condition of Ireland ameliorated will follow such false lights, or trouble himself about the hateful passages of discord, turmoil, alternate treachery and tyranny which our history, distorted as it is, so plenteously affords. Researches of that nature are as mischievous as useless, and the anxiety with which the new born zeal of *young Ireland* reverts to such topics, should serve as a warning for cooler heads to avoid altogether their discussion.

But, to weigh in impartial scales the conduct of the Irish executive, to judge dispassionately of their acts, and give to them an enlarged and liberal interpretation, is a task which may be per-

formed without any sacrifice of personal independence, and with the greatest advantage to the country. It may tend to tranquillize the public mind, to separate the real wants from the imaginary grievances of the people ; and, at all events, such an attempt is far more patriotic than to pass one's life in misanthropic lamentations over the disorganization of the people, or in unmeaning murmurs against the conduct of the possessors of power.

The difficulties which at first sight present themselves to this or any dispassionate enquiry, are of no trifling nature, for the public mind has been heretofore disturbed, not more by Mr. O'Connell's party, whose views will be presently discussed, than by a set of gentlemen, who, professing very violent opinions on the opposite side, appeared to have made up their minds from the outset, to be discontented with every act of government which was not arranged within their own circle, and to refuse the Minister and the Viceroy credit for all measures, not fully in accordance with the plans those gentlemen had formed before Lord De Grey's arrival in Ireland. They very much resembled in their conduct during the past year, that supporter of Sir Francis Burdett at one of the Westminster elections, who hearing a long *ululatus* of "no war" — "no taxes" — "no Pitt," &c., &c., vindicated the liberality of his sentiments by shouting, "no nothing," as the *ne plus ultra* of non-conformity. They determined to reject everything which came

recommended by Lord De Grey or Lord Eliot, and whether the measure was one of conciliation or coercion, whether the blow was struck high, or low, or between, it appeared equally ill favoured. If coercion, it came late; if conciliation, it was truckling to the dismemberment faction.

Strange indeed were the political phenomena which the close of eighteen hundred and forty-one exhibited. The moment the great victory of that year over the Whig-Radical power was achieved, and scarcely was Sir Robert Peel yet invested with the insignia of office, when a howl of revengeful triumph was raised in Ireland by a most unmanageable class, the descendants and remains of the old Orange faction. Already they put forth their hands to clutch their prey, and very openly and very freely declared that Ireland should be governed upon "ascendancy principles;" that popular demonstrations must at once be met with the only weapons their forefathers condescended to use, the bayonet and the gibbet; that the system of national education should forthwith be taken from Archbishop Whately and Dr. Murray, and transferred to Lord Rathdowne and Mr. Gregg; and that the Viceroy would receive his guests at the Castle, to the martial air of the "Boyne Water." On the other extreme, there were found prophets amongst the liberal party who exclaimed—perchance the wish was father to the thought—that Ireland would soon reek with blood—that her fields would be stained with

agrarian murder — that the midnight assassin would stalk abroad—the gaols be filled—the ninety-eight system adopted—spies and informers let loose upon the country—martial law proclaimed—Catholics trampled upon, and that the patronage of the Crown would be confined exclusively to members of the protestant faith. Such were the representations of the two extreme factions. The programme of the ministerial policy was supplied by the one, and countersigned with what of authority the other could confer, and the announcement was made, that the new ministry were to open the theatre of Irish affairs with all the furniture of the vulgar melo-drama—massacre, bloodshed, and atrocity.

Not indeed that either party had from the advisers of the Crown, any grounds for calculating upon such a course of action. Quite the reverse : Sir Robert Peel made his advances to power, admitting that he felt the difficulties of the Irish administration, but demonstrating and proclaiming by every word and deed that he was determined to conquer all obstacles, come from whatsoever side they might, to the peace and prosperity of this distracted country. From the first moment he gave to the entire people of Ireland, to the friends as well as to the enemies of his administration, ample notification of what his policy would be. It seemed impossible for the greatest dulness or the greatest malignity, to misunderstand or misrepresent his intentions.

In the debate on the address on the 27th of August, 1841, Sir Robert Peel, then in opposition, but likely to remain so but for a few days, exposes the folly of connecting him with the Orange party:—

“I am told that I must necessarily be the instrument of effecting objects in Ireland, which I myself disapprove. I am asked whether I dare affront my associates and partizans. The honourable member for Meath, (Mr. Grattan) had alluded to the conduct of a public functionary in Ireland, who he said had offered an insult to the religious feelings of his fellow countrymen, by some public act of an offensive nature. I am not afraid of expressing my opinions with respect to acts like this, and I say at once, that there is no man in this house, *no Roman Catholic member*, who heard with deeper pain or deeper regret, that a gratuitous and unprovoked insult had been offered to the religious feelings of the people of Ireland. If I cannot gain power or retain it, except by encouraging and favouring such feelings, I say at once that the day on which I relinquish power, rather than defer to such feelings, will be ten times a prouder one than the day on which I obtained it. If I do accept office it shall be by no intrigue—it shall be by no unworthy concession of constitutional principle. *It shall be by no unnatural and factious combination with men—* honest I believe them to be—*entertaining extreme opinions, but from whom I dissent.*”

Again, on the 17th of September, 1841, in the very first debate on the policy of the new administration, alluding to a panegyric which Lord John Russell had passed upon the constitution of the Irish branch of the government, Sir Robert Peel, then in office, said—

“The noble lord did me justice in a frank and handsome manner, with respect to the course I have pursued, and the advice I have tendered to the crown regarding the government of Ireland. But if I have already attracted some degree of confidence on that ground, let me remind the noble

“ Lord what were the confident predictions made a short time back, with respect to the course I must take relative to Ireland. Was I not told night after night, that I would not dare to form a government for that country, that I could not form one which would attract general confidence? Was I not told that I must be the instrument—the *reluctant and degraded instrument of men who were ready to offer coarse insults to their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen?* Was I not told that they would hoist the standard of ascendancy, and demand from me a complete and servile acquiescence in their views? That, it was said, would be the inevitable consequence of my accession to power, and yet not a month has elapsed, and the noble lord admits that over that difficulty at least I have triumphed, and constituted a government for Ireland in such a manner as gives assurance that the *universal people of that country shall be treated with impartiality and justice. I have made no concessions for the purpose of purchasing support. I intend to administer the law with firmness, and I hope with dignity.* I will not permit the administration of Irish affairs to be influenced by the hope of conciliating support in the House of Commons; but *I declare that the engagement into which I have entered, to administer impartial justice in that country, shall, as far as depends upon me, be strictly fulfilled.*

Was there any thing wanting,—any gloss or obscurity,—in this statement? If comment or explanation was necessary, it was at once found in the manly, spirited, and open avowal of Lord Eliot, on his return for East Cornwall.

“ The Government shall pay court to no party in Ireland. It will endeavour to do justice to all. *It will not be the government of a party, but of the entire Irish people.*”

These solemn declarations made by the Prime Minister on the one hand, and by the Secretary for Ireland on the other, were a full intimation of the views of Government. If the movement party

had really patriotic designs, enough was done to induce them at least to suspend their threatened operations. If their objects were the dispensation of equal justice to the entire Irish people, the promotion of peace and harmony, the encouragement of industry and the arts, a golden opportunity was then presented, to advance the real interests and secure the ultimate happiness of their country. Had the people, the long deluded people, been then allowed to come forward and accept the boon which was proffered them, instead of calculating the gold wrung from the wretched peasantry, to gratify the ambition, or feed the extravagance, or glut the appetites, of the hungry and profligate and dishonest underlings of the Repeal Association, we would be now engaged in devising plans for the appropriation of that capital which would have flowed in thousands and hundreds of thousands into the country. The wealth of England, drawn from hazardous enterprises in the remotest quarters of the globe, would have been expended upon the proximate and congenial fields which this country,—fertile in every thing but prudence,—so bounteously presents.

“Dis aliter visum,”

The genius of misrule, civil commotion, and Mr. O’Connell prevailed, and if Ireland become rich and powerful, it can only be in spite of the misdirected energies of her sons.

Vehement were the retorts made by Mr. O’Con-

nell in his inflammatory speeches, to the attacks which were not made upon his unhappy countrymen. Loud was his defiance to the Government, upon the adoption of measures which only existed in his own charnel-house imagination. Stern were his declarations of the fighting strength and quick valour of his countrymen, if assailed. Unfortunately for Mr. O'Connell's calculations, his countrymen were not assailed. No franchises were despoiled,—no priests hunted down. The Maynooth grant was not stopped. The national education system was not interfered with. Not a grievance was to be found on any side. The Minister of the Crown showed no inclination to proclaim war against the subjects of his Sovereign. There was, throughout his movements, an obstinate perseverance in the work of peace,—a marplot determination to dispense impartial justice. He kindled no flame at which the trading incendiary might light the torch of discontent ; but spite of slander and calumny and provocation of all kinds,—the defection of friends,—the turbulence of foes, persisted, and still persists, in relying upon the strength of the law, and the ordinary powers which the constitution confers for the pacification of the country.

As the first earnest of his policy, Sir Robert Peel sent to Ireland, as the representative of his Sovereign, a nobleman of great landed possessions, connected by marriage with some of the most ancient families in the country,—en-

lightened in his views,—attached to no faction,—committed to no coercive or rigorous measures,—a distinguished patron of the arts, which have already felt the influence of his fostering hand. His family were remembered as strenuous supporters of the different efforts to remove Roman Catholic disabilities. Firm and impartial in his character, dignified in his bearing, he was at once the man to repress faction and keep sycophancy aloof. To Lord De Grey was joined, as Secretary for Ireland, another nobleman of the highest character and honor. Distinguished as a diplomatist abroad;—at home he was always an advocate of the rights of the Irish Roman Catholics, and in Parliament had been remarked for his disregard of party when the interests of mankind were at stake. Of winning manners and ingenuous disposition, Lord Eliot is admitted, by his bitterest opponents, to be pure as the sun in his motives. He was a happy mean between that right gallant soldier, Sir Henry Hardinge, and the amiable, well intentioned, but too easy and metaphorical Lord Morpeth. Such a man was wanting to Ireland; but whilst his character was a tower of strength against the enemies of the constitution, his arrival disappointed the hopes of a small circle of very hasty and arrogant politicians.

One of the causes of this disappointment is now too well known to admit of contradiction or concealment. It had been settled by those who had no authority to settle any thing, that a member

of the Irish Conservative party, in himself respectable enough, should be made Secretary for Ireland, and very outrageous results were expected from that appointment. Without venturing, or at all intending to impugn the character, or depreciate the abilities of that gentleman, it must be manifest to all fair men, who recollect the political school in which he had been educated, how often his name had been the watchword of intolerance, and an object of hatred to the people of Ireland, that the appointment of such a man at such a time would have been an abandonment of the policy of Sir Robert Peel,—a flat contradiction to his repeated declarations in the House of Commons, and worse than all, the signal for the commencement of a new era of religious feud and national discord. Impressed with the solemnity of the position of Ireland, the minister did not venture on such an act, and forthwith, a leading Conservative Journal sought to scare Lord Eliot from his office before he touched our shores. The same attacks were then made upon him personally, which have been since repeated against every act of his administration, great or small, legislative or executive. At the same moment commenced the opposition of both ultra sections. The shout of war was raised on all sides, and after two years of the most unceasing and vexatious opposition, the results are practically before us. All impartial men have seen into the imprudence, not to say the selfishness, of the attacks upon the Government by their *candid*

friends, whilst prudent men of all religions are preparing to second with word and deed the policy of the Government, the best which tide or time permitted, for preserving at once the peace and the union of the kingdoms.

The most faithful mirror in which that policy can be seen, is the measures which it has dictated, and what, unworthily for the honor of this country, is in Ireland considered far more important than the advancement of measures,—the advancement of men in the public departments. For in truth, in Ireland, every thing in the nature of an appointment has become a matter of interest, inquiry, speculation, and bitter canvass. Nay, more, parties contend with as much acrimony about a clerkship of the hanaper, or the registry office, or of the crown,—as if the reform bill, or the new commercial tariff, or the abolition of tithes, or negro slavery, were shaking in the balance. During the Whig administrations there was not a family in the country round, which had not become a busy scene of unwholesome speculation. Places, places were the hope and the theme of all. There was not a department in the state, from the stipendiary magistracy to the lowest excise office, the likelihood of obtaining which was not eagerly discussed. The rage for something was every where,—in the cabin and in the castle. It is needless to say, that the Bar was in a blaze of hope. Men who, after six years, had still walked the Hall in undisturbed leisure, now looked up in the

world ; and all the volunteer lawyers, the men of registries and enquiries and commissions, did, with great energy, hold up their heads, that the wig of the assistant-barrister might fall thereon. Hope and speculation took the place of sober regulated ambition ; and now the rage of disappointment, the fury of unsatisfied longing, have swelled the waters which have risen against the Government.

This appetite for Government appointments, gratified to a most reckless extent by Lord Normanby's government, has grown with unnatural luxuriance amongst a gentry as needy as proud, given to extravagance without the means of supporting it, and disposed to prefer the uncertain favors of a government to the certain rewards which industry and perseverance return. Small politicians and small place-hunters are become synonymes in Ireland. They swarm over the country. To this unnatural competition must be traced the impolitic and indefatigable attention which all the journals pay to even the smallest donation from the Castle, and hence, the most trifling appointments are daily made serious topics of accusation against the Government.

It is not, however, by such considerations that the policy of appointments in Ireland is to be judged. A general and more extended view should be taken. We must reflect, on the one hand, that the Government was chosen for the benefit of the entire country,—of seven millions of Roman Catholics, as well as for Mr. Gregg and

those loyal Protestant operatives who first heard political truth from his abounding tongue. The peace of the country is to be preserved. The hands of the Government are to be strengthened. It must be the desire of the men who carried the great charter of Roman Catholic freedom, practically to extinguish all religious disqualification. But it could not, on the other hand, be expected that Lord De Grey, on his accession to the Government of Ireland, would neglect the claims of men who, in opposition, fought the Conservative battle, and select for favor those only who had been remarkable in the ranks of their enemies.

"Every honorable connexion," says Mr. Burke, "will avow it is their first purpose, to pursue every just method to put the men who hold their opinions into such a condition, as may enable them to carry their common plans into execution, with all the power and authority of the state ; *without a proscription of others*, they are bound to give to their own party a preference."* Acting upon this principle, the Conservative party, when in opposition, declined to make the appointment of Mr. Richards, Mr. Pigot, and Mr. Monahan,—all of them, especially the two latter, known to hold very ultra liberal opinions—subjects of hostile observation. And indeed, since the formation of the present Government, scarcely any one in parliament, Mr. Sheil excepted,

* Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents. Burke's Works, vol. 2, 335.

has had the courage or the want of candour, to make the appointments of Chief Justice Pennefather, Baron Lefroy, Mr. Blackburne, Mr. Keatinge, or Mr. Litton, a matter of charge against the executive. Those gentlemen, independently of their political opinions, had entitled themselves to the position they now occupy by their great practice and experience at the bar ; and no man of any party could say he was unjustly postponed when they were advanced.* But the Government did not stop there. It would have been worse than folly to expect them to select for reward, their open, avowed, and unflinching opponents. Mr. Monahan, who had been a member of the National Association, could hardly hope to be Lord De Grey's legal adviser. Mr. Pigot had staked his fortunes with the movement party, and had been selected as the first law officer of the Repeal Corporation of Dublin. Mr. Moore had just marked the extent of his liberal opinions by deserting,—acting no doubt from conscientious motives,—the Conservative party, to which through his previous career he had been zealously attached. But the utmost that could be effected in the present state of parties, Lord De Grey performed. He proclaimed to the Roman Catholic population, that there should be no religious proscription or dis-

* Mr. Lefroy had been three times offered the bench ; once by Lord Wellesley.

qualification, and that minor differences of political opinion should be forgotten in a steady support of the Union and the Constitution. Conducting the Government upon this plan, opening its arms thus wide for the reception of firm and moderate men of all religions, was an attempt as generous and as statesmanlike as could be conceived, to triumph over the heretofore irreconcilable jealousies of Irish politics, and strike the roots of British connexion deep and wide in the interests, feelings, and associations of the country.

Carrying out these views, appointments have been made, from amongst many of the old maintainers of Conservative opinions ; but none will be found on the list who did not add to the claims of

“ Long tried faith and friendship’s holy ties,”

the “ firm basis of desert,” forgotten by the Whig administrations. Nor is there amongst those appointed, a single one to whom any fair and reasonable man can object, as unfitted, by ultra opinions, to be the judge or the officer of a Roman Catholic people. From out the entire, no doubt the opponents of Lord De Grey’s government would fix upon Mr. Blackburn, Mr. Lefroy, or Mr. Litton ; but Mr. Blackburn had been Attorney-General under Lord Grey, and Mr. Lefroy was entitled to claim, as a right, even a much higher position than that which he now occupies,

by reason of the great sacrifices he had made,—the vast professional emoluments he had acquired and resigned,—his great reputation as a lawyer on both sides of the hall,—his high connexions in the country, and above all, his unsullied character as a man. Moreover, each and every of those gentlemen, Mr. Litton as well as Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Lefroy, have, since their accession to the judicial seat, won from all parties and all men, by their knowledge, the urbanity of their demeanor, and the strict impartiality of their conduct,—the most unqualified approbation.

Let us turn to the names of those on whom those appointments have been bestowed.

“ Sir Edward Sugden, Lord Chancellor.

Chief Justice Pennefather.

Baron Lefroy.

Mr. Justice Jackson.

Right Hon. Francis Blackburne, Master of the Rolls.

Master Litton.

Doctor Keatinge, Judge of the Prerogative Court.

T. B. C. Smith, Attorney-General.

Richard Wilson Greene, Solicitor-General.

Serjeant Warren.

Serjeant Howley,* (a).

Henry Kemmis, Chairman of Kilmainham.

Christopher Coppinger,* Assistant-barrister.

Mr. O’Leary,* Registrar of Lunatic Custodees.

Mr. Hughes,* Commissioner of Lunacy.

(a) (*) Thus marked are Roman Catholics.

Mr. Baldwin, Q.C.*	}	Crown prosecutors on Circuit ^(a) .
Mr. Mac Dermott,*		
Mr. Keogh,*		
Mr. Charles Burke,*		
Mr. O'Fallon,*		
Stephen Seed,	}	Clerks of the Crown.
Alexander Bate,		
Thomas Mostyn,		
Arthur Young,		
Thomas Brereton,	}	Stipendiary Magistrates.
John B. Kernan,*		
R. D. Coulson,		
E. J. Priestly,		
Pilsworth Whelan,		
Arthur Cane, Receiver of Constabulary.		
James O'Reilly, First Clerk in Receiver's Office.*		

With this list before the Protestant whose allegiance to the Conservative party is sought to be shaken, let him answer has he not sufficient to assure him that no surrender of his rights or principles is intended? After its perusal, can any thing be wanting to convince him, that the *pseudo* Conservative who assails Lord De Grey and Lord Eliot, because of the distribution of patronage, is as ignorant of fact as forgetful of party friendships. With this list before the Roman Catholics, and containing, as it does, the names of many members of their creed who showed an inclination to stand by the union of the kingdoms, they may

(a) A number of other gentlemen were also named to similar situations. The names only of those who were Roman Catholics are selected.

without any sacrifice of truth, be thus addressed by the ministers of the crown:—"True! the Government has promoted some of those who laboured through years of doubt and difficulty to give them the opportunity which alone makes place desirable,—of carrying into practical operation their common principles. True! they have done what every honorable feeling which binds party together required,—what, if even the higher feelings of honor and friendship were forgotten, the "*regni novitas*" would enforce. As a Roman Catholic, you cannot complain, for during ten years a government was in power, which scattered with an indiscriminate hand every gift of the crown amongst the Roman Catholic population. But, if you be a Roman Catholic well affected to the union of the kingdoms, in the appointments and the declarations already made, you have abundant security that so far from your religion being a ground of proscription, it is, and justly, an introduction to the favor of a government anxious to reconcile both races in this kingdom,—to remove religious inequalities,—to amalgamate Protestant England and Catholic Ireland; and above all, to divert the attention and energies of a bold and hardy people from the unattainable redress of past and irretrievable wrongs, to the attainable social advancement of the country."

Let us, next, consider some of those appointments in detail. Sir Edward Sugden was selected as Chancellor of Ireland for two reasons. One,

that he was believed to be the very first equity lawyer at the English bar ; and the importance of such a selection will be at once admitted, in a country from which the appellate jurisdiction has been removed, and where the burden and vexation of improper decisions must be proportionately increased. But there was another, and an honest motive of a personal nature. Sir Edward Sugden felt that he ought not to enjoy in idleness a large pension, whilst he was able to earn it by the discharge of judicial duties. On this point, both he and the Government of Sir Robert Peel show forth in admirable contrast to the last act of Lord Melbourne's administration. The removal of Lord Plunket in a coarse and unfeeling manner, of that light, which, even in its decline, shed a brilliant halo around his associates, for the purpose of bestowing upon Lord Campbell a peerage and a life-pension in return for a week's work, can scarcely be paralleled in the history of party corruption. But it must have been gratifying to the people of Ireland to hear Sir Robert Peel declare, that if Sir Edward Sugden had not felt bound, for the above reason, to take the seals, he would have selected the Irish Chancellor from the Irish bar.*

Now, as to the merits of Sir Edward Sugden, except in the callous columns of dishonest journalism, there can be no dispute. His abilities as a judge may

* See Debate on the Policy of Ministers, 17th September, 1841.

be disposed of by a single question fearlessly put. Where, in the whole range of "Chancellor Biography," from Lord Somers to Lord Cottenham, can one be found more skilled in all the branches of equity jurisprudence? But, as the head of the Court of Chancery, the public good he has done is not confined to his admirable decisions. For the last century and a half, the rules of the court were an inexplicable mass of confusion, generating expense, litigation, and delay. Sir Edward Sugden was the first who had the courage to order, that from a particular day all former rules should be abolished, and to combine, in a couple of hundred short and simple orders, the whole machinery of equity litigation. By this sweeping reform, he has done more for the suitors of this country, than could have been effected by twenty years of legislation. In this, if in no other manner, he has proved himself to be a substantial benefactor of the people of Ireland. Yet he is constantly an object of coarse calumny and ungenerous vituperation. He cannot be forgiven by one side, for the dismissal of magistrates who took part in repeal meetings. He should, says the other extreme, have given his opinion as a constitutional lawyer, that not only to act or speak, but even to *think* "repeal," was dangerous, unconstitutional, and seditious. But, would not any one who had maturely deliberated upon this proceeding say, that whilst, to ensure the peace of the country, and as a public example, the dismissal of those gentlemen was necessary, yet,

to make the step effectual, by carrying with it public opinion, it should not have gone one inch farther than the exigencies of the time required.

At a moment of tremendous popular excitement, it was impossible to leave in the commission, persons who had been guilty of the heedless folly of heading gatherings of enormous masses, whose numbers made at least a *prima facie* case of danger to the peace of the country. In what position would they have found themselves, if it became necessary to disperse, under their sanction, meetings which they had themselves summoned. But, apart from such reasoning, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion, that they were wholly unfitted to hold her Majesty's commission, who have since consented to act under a deputation from men avowing their object, to supersede and render unnecessary all the established legal tribunals of the land. So far, experience has proved the propriety of their dismissal. It was necessary as a precaution, and still more, as an example to the people. But Sir Edward Sugden would have indeed outstepped his office, not to speak of his good sense and knowledge of the constitution, by directly or indirectly asserting, that either to think, or speak, or act, *within the bounds of the constitution*, for the purpose of altering or amending, or even repealing the act of union, was illegal or unconstitutional.

Take next, the appointments of Judge Jackson and Sergeant Warren. The opinions of Judge Jack-

son and Sergeant Warren on the national education question have been flung in the face of the Government. Forsooth, no government is fit to hold the reins, amongst whose officers, from the highest to the lowest, there is any difference of opinion. In what state catechism is this principle to be found? Omitting all mention of political differences amongst the subordinate officers of Government, has there been a single *Cabinet* in England for the last century, in which there has been an unanimity of opinion upon all questions? For twenty years, the Catholic claims were an open question. Under the Whigs, the ballot was an open question. Mr. Shiel, an avowed repealer, held high office* under Lord Melbourne's administration. Instance upon instance might be mentioned, of partial differences of opinion between members of government holding much higher appointments than either that of Sergeant-at-Law or Solicitor-General for Ireland. In fact, the more we examine into the appointments of the Irish Government, the more it will be manifest that they have been made in a perfect spirit of justice and fair play, and without in the smallest respect departing from the policy and the principles proclaimed by Lord De Grey and Lord Eliot on their accession to power.

Having so far dwelt upon the appointments, the

* Vice-President of the Board of Trade.

general policy of Lord De Grey's Government may be quickly and easily described. It is fenced around by none of the terrors or ascendancy of faction. It appeals to no prejudices for support; nor is it disguised in any of the mysterious refinements of office. No inflated functionary at the Castle can now call himself the depository of the state secret. Intelligible and common place, neither attempting to dazzle, to awe, or to delude, it presents nothing to gratify that pruriency for legislative change or executive wonders which is the curse of the times we live in. The policy of the Government is expressed by one word—peace, peace in the face of the factions which would dismember the empire,—in spite of the party which would precipitate a civil war, and lose a people, even though a dependency was secured. It is peace, without which all attempts at improvement are in vain—enquiries without result,—capital without return. If all the intellects of all the statesmen who have ever turned their attention to the condition of Ireland, were combined in one effort to devise a plan for her improvement, she would, unless peace were restored over the face of the country, baffle their united wisdom. To effect this great object, is the true statesmanlike Conservative policy. To this end, all the efforts of the Government have been incessantly directed, and not without effect.

By what measures and under what circumstances has this peace been preserved? The years 1842

and 1843 were years emphatically of *monster agitation* ; and during almost the entire of that period, every vocabulary of disparagement and misrepresentation were exhausted upon the policy of Lord De Grey's Government. "Have we a government at all?" was the question oft repeated by those who still called themselves supporters of Sir Robert Peel. "When is this insane inaction to end? How far will "Repeal" be allowed to go? Already it is beyond the reach of the Government! The compact between the loyal Protestants and the administration is broken! No protection,—no allegiance!" Such were the clamours day by day raised against the Government by men who spoke, they would have us believe, more in sorrow than in anger; but yet, with the most monstrous injustice, took care to forget that the Government was not accountable for the wretched state of agitation and disorganization in which Ireland was found after ten years of Whig rule; and moreover, never reflected that they were themselves feeding the flame of agitation by their attacks upon the Government. There was nothing new or unforeseen in the state of the country to warrant such charges. The same outcry, excitement, and agitation, which for thirty years previously, had paralyzed the efforts of every well wisher of Ireland, was brought into play to thwart Lord De Grey's Government. But was it possible by any measures to anticipate and prevent this movement? The answer is obvious. It was impossible.

As long as Ireland continues in her social state, the victim of miseries which are not paralleled in any country,—miseries for which neither the Government of this day nor the Government they supplanted are accountable ; a demagogue of massive intellectual power, great zeal, little or rather loose principle, indomitable energy, unparalleled popular eloquence, and intimately versed in all the avenues to the Irish heart, will find little difficulty at any time in raising an agitation. It matters not what the subject of agitation may be, whether for fiscal, or religious, or legislative independence. The materials are in the acknowledged social miseries of the people ; and an uneducated mass cares not under what banner it marches, if the vista is closed with the promise of plenty, comfort, and ease. Hence it has happened that Mr. O'Connell has with impunity for the last thirteen years played the masses of Ireland at a variety of games, creating and dissolving during that period more than ten associations, beginning with the "Parliamentary Intelligence Society of 1830," and terminating with the "Loyal National Repeal Association of 1840." But great as has been the force which many causes contributed to confer upon this last Association, its progress and its numbers were materially increased, by the abrupt, sudden, and absurd declaration of a distinguished and opulent Irish Conservative journal,—“that many leading men of the Conservative party were considering how the Repeal might be effected

with perfect security to their interests," thus admitting the practicability of the attempt, and seconding the admission by incessant and unmeasured attacks upon the Irish executive.

Meanwhile, what course did the Government pursue? Mr. O'Connell was allowed to complete his organization. He was permitted to call together the masses of the people in thousands and tens of thousands, until his aggregate meetings were as common-place as his weekly gatherings at the "Conciliation Hall." In every part of the country, north, south, east, and west, *monster meetings* were convened. There was not a peasant far or near, young or old, who did not see the face and hear the voice of his deliverer. Wild and stern were the defiances hurled against the Government at those meetings. "To do or die," was in every mouth; and Mr. O'Connell pledged his reputation as a leader, his character as a Constitutional lawyer, and his head as a man, that the Union should be repealed before the year was over. No doubt, such boasts and promises worked a powerful effect upon the peasantry. They placed the most solemn reliance upon the no less solemn pledges of their chief, and confidently awaited their fulfilment. It would be difficult, if not impossible, since perhaps the grand impostor of Mecca, to point out any man in history, who has had so numerous, so faithful, so credulous a following as Mr. O'Connell. The Irish people believed in him as if he were the prophet of God, and the highest effort of their faith was

concentrated on his solemn adjuration, that Repeal should be carried ere the year was over. That year is past. The wonders of Mullaghmast, Tara, Lismore, are over, and almost forgotten. The Meath infantry, who surpassed the "Imperial Guards" in discipline, and the Clifden Light Horse, whom the household cavalry of England *would in vain pursue*,* are gone into winter quarters. A single proclamation at the right moment, and when excitement could go no farther,—when there was no possibility, by any shuffling or chicanery whatsoever, for Mr. O'Connell to wriggle out of his declarations,—was sufficient to display the resolve of the Government, and to shake the fabric of agitation to its base. By reserving that blow until the crisis had arrived, a terrible but useful lesson has been taught to the people. They have discovered that thousands have been wrung from their poverty, to support a staff of the most corrupt, debased, and dastardly minions that ever congregated around a popular leader. Hundreds of the wretched dupes, who were taught,—under the specious pretext of "fixity of tenure,"—that rents would never again be enforced, are now eating in sorrow the bitter fruit of their delusion. The spell of forty years duration is broken. The weak, the credulous, and the timid, who confided

* Mr. Dillon Browne, (Member for Mayo) about whose patriotism there is a racy jocularly, thus silyly complimented the "mounted Repealers" of the west.

in Mr. O'Connell's moderation, have seen the abyss into which he had all but carried them. The bold and adventurous, who believed that his threats, defiance, and protestations had a meaning, turn from him with scorn. Speak to the Irish peasant in any quarter, and he is bitterly disappointed.* Such has been the first result of the ministerial policy.

But the delusion, and its exposure, have not been confined to the uneducated masses. Some dozens of enthusiastic generous young men, of quick capacities and showy education, have for a few years back been gathering together in the city of Dublin. Many of them in 1834, eagerly flocked to the standard of Repeal and O'Connell, and subsequently were cast aside for the more substantial alliance of Litchfield House. Taught by experience, they held aloof from the present movement, until the solemn protestations of 1842, "to perish or prevail—to do or die," won their tardy adhesion. Above the seductions of pecuniary plunder, which their ambition scorned, and their education taught them to loathe, it became necessary to invent for them some novelty of more than ordinary attraction. At once the happy idea of a convention of three hundred gentlemen, privileged to pay One Hundred Pounds each, and meeting in defiance of the law, occurred to Mr. O'Connell. This Convention

* The Repeal rent has fallen since the proclamation putting down the Clontarf meeting, from two thousand to two hundred pounds a week.

he solemnly pledged himself should sit before December. Immediately both extremes were violently agitated. The alarmists exclaimed that all was lost, that the Government was demented. *Young Ireland* was in an ecstasy of delight. History was scanned for parallel conventions, and every thing was ready. What course did the Government pursue? They wisely declined to be hurried from their position, or to take one step in advance of the necessity of the times. The Convention did not assemble, and *Young Ireland* is champing the bit of disappointment and distrust.

What next? The legal tribunals of the country were to be superseded. Mr. O'Connell pledged himself that since the people were not to have Repeal magistrates, they should not want Repeal judges. Arbitration Courts were established, and the populace, whose sinking faith clung to any straw, believed that by this move at least Lord De Grey and his Government would be check-mated. Here again the alarmists interposed, and called upon the Government to put down the Arbitration Courts by force. For forty years, the great secret of Mr. O'Connell's influence over the peasantry, has been a belief in his infallibility. The character of the Irish peasant may be summed up in three words—boldness, quickness, cunning. He delights in a successful scheme, and was confident that Mr. O'Connell was the prince of jugglers. Above all things, it is important to break this influence, for it is the mainspring of Mr. O'Connell's power. But

the exertion of force on petty occasions could serve only to increase the attachment of the people. In the instance of the Arbitration Courts, the Government prudently declined to interfere, and what has been the consequence? The peasantry, who are not without a quick perception of the ridiculous, have laughed the arbitration judges out of court, and added this one to the other disappointments for which Mr. O'Connell is accountable.

But let it not be thought or asserted, that in these results, which have been so happily accomplished, the Government is indebted more to chance than policy. On the contrary, every measure for preserving the tranquillity of the country was most maturely taken. Providing for the worst evil which could by any possibility afflict us, civil war, a gallant army was cantoned in all parts of the country, to awe the disaffected and restore confidence to the friends of British connexion. In Parliament an arms bill was passed "to disarm,—in the words of Mr. Grattan,—by the law, a banditti who had disarmed the gentry by force." At home the magistracy was purged. Every part of the country was placed in a state of defence, and a determined front presented on all sides to the enemies of the constitution. Finally, when the daring of Mr. O'Connell appeared to know no bounds,—when he told his followers that the Government feared to assail him,—when his language and his acts assumed the tone and the character, not of agitation, but revolution,—when

his paid proconsuls issued orders directing the people to practice a military organization,—when his addresses assumed the form of royal proclamations, and he vaunted that his great legal acquirements guaranteed impunity to all his words and actions, then the executive resolved to move, then they struck the blow, not against the underlings, but the loftiest amongst the tribe of agitators. They called Mr. O'Connell himself, to appear before the judges of the land and a jury of his countrymen, either to prove his innocence, or receive their verdict of guilt and condemnation.

Upon the questions to be decided at that trial, it would be in the last degree objectionable at this moment to comment. But, it may be observed, and will be admitted by every one who reflects more upon the events of the last two months than the excitement of the present hour, that Lord De Grey's Government is now perfectly independent of the result of the prosecutions. Whatever verdict a jury, composed of as high and honorable men as are to be met in the kingdom, shall upon their oaths and upon the evidence find, the policy and the position of the Irish administration cannot be affected or impaired. That policy has already accomplished its objects. It has dispersed the agitation which from end to end was convulsing the country,—falsified the predictions of the great Apostle of moral agitation,—broken the spell of his influence,—awakened the people from the delusion in which they were wrapped,—tested

the power of "moral agitation," heretofore believed invincible, because never met by the charge step,—compelled the leaders of the agitation to admit, in the face of Europe, the futility, the weakness, the dishonesty of their threats and denunciations, and proved to the outraged, deluded, and plundered peasantry, that their invincible and mighty leaders are as amenable to the law and the judges of the Queen's Courts, as the humblest transgressor in the country.

Moral agitation has been heretofore a great power and a great name. It has awed many governments by working upon their fears. But moral agitation can only vanquish a government armed with the law and the establishment, by a "make-believe" that it is supported by a greater physical power than the Government can wield against it, and that if driven to extremities it will use that power. It conquers, if at all, as a line of British infantry, by boldness and audacity, 'ere the bayonets have an opportunity of being crossed. But woe be to the believers in moral agitation, when the Government is ready to try its strength, and finds it, as Lord De Grey's government has found the repeal agitation of 1843, unsupported by physical courage or power.

Such being the appointments, the policy, and the position of the Irish Government, it remained for this administration to combine justice with vigour, and to commence, at the moment when a seditious agitation was stopped in its career, a

searching and extensive investigation into the social miseries of the people. Convinced that all legislation for Ireland must be positively mischievous, until the causes of her misery are pursued from the mansion of the landlord to the hut of the peasant,—from the people to the priest,—from the poor-house to the prison, Sir Robert Peel has adopted the wise and beneficent course of appointing a Commission, selected from both parties, Whig as well as Tory, Catholic as well as Protestant, to scrutinise the condition of the entire Irish peasantry, and suggest the necessary remedies. In performing this duty, the Commission, over which Lord Devon presides, finds its progress impeded by men who seem to dread the amelioration of the condition of the people; as calculated to destroy all pretexts for agitation. Scarcely has this Commission commenced its sittings, when the most unfounded, but yet pointless insinuations, are scattered abroad, to divert the attention of the people from the consideration of their real grievances. They are daily solicited not to place confidence in the Commission, although seats at its board were offered to more than one adherent of the late administration,* and notwithstanding that persons of all parties and conditions are encouraged, even solicited, by the Commissioners, to assist the enquiry with all the information in their power. Some, too, there are, so crotchety as to despair

* Mr. More O'Ferrall and Mr. Wyse.

of any good results flowing from the enquiry, because, forsooth, it ought to have been, and was not earlier instituted ; as if the agitation, which has been encouraged by the very men who raise those objections, had not rendered all enquiry heretofore impossible, by diverting the attention of Parliament and the Government from the consideration of social grievances, to meet dangers which threatened the existence of the empire.

Now, however, the question of landlord and tenant is most eagerly mooted through the country, and the plan is sought, which, without invading the rights of property,—as despite Mr. O'Connell's protestations, his "fixity of tenure" most distinctly contemplates,—may give to the tenant that certainty, if not of tenure, at least of a return for the labour and the capital he has expended upon the soil, indispensable to an improved system of agriculture, and restore that confidence between the landlord and the tenant, without which neither the one can be secure, nor the other peaceful, prosperous, or happy. What are the obstacles to this undertaking ?

Heretofore the peasantry of Ireland has not been the only impoverished class. Unfortunately for them, the landlord has been too often coerced by his necessities, to make the occupiers of his estates feel the first weight of his misfortunes. The extravagance of past days, and the incumbrances which consequently accumulated, have been

a fruitful cause of the misery of the Irish agriculturist. To pay the interest on a mortgage, and yet retain some surplus in his hands, the landlord is compelled to make the possession of his land the object of unnatural competition. Again, when, overwhelmed by debts, the estate passes from the hands of the proprietor into the custody of a Chancery receiver, all hope of an equitable adjustment is lost to the tenant.

It is notorious that the landed property of Ireland, to an amount perfectly incredible to the English public, is in the hands of the Court of Chancery. The western counties especially, are to a great extent withdrawn from the control and natural protection of the proprietor. What has been the consequence of this system? It was found by experience, that very enormous depredations were committed by Chancery receivers. Their accounts were not passed for a series of years, and very often they were appointed by consent, and without any security whatsoever. Thus it frequently happened, that at the end of a Chancery suit, a great portion of the receipts of the property, during its progress, was lost, and the creditor discovered that the little which was left would not satisfy half his demand. It became, therefore, necessary to watch the system of receivership with considerable attention, to require solvent securities in all cases, to compel an annual account, and make the receiver liable for all rent which he had not endeavoured to enforce *by*

distress or attachment. The results may be easily imagined. The receiver, to save himself, has in all cases to distrain and sell the crop of the tenant. Let the year be ever so bad, he can neither afford delay or indulgence. His apprehensions as well as his interest urge him to coerce the tenant. In vain does the latter point to the allowances and relief afforded upon the adjoining estate, in consideration of a disastrous harvest. The receiver of the Court of Chancery can neither make an allowance nor afford relief. The crop must go to an untimely sale, and the wretched tenant, in order to obtain the smallest abatement, is left to the doubtful issue of an expensive Chancery application, to which his means are altogether inadequate. To find a remedy for grievances of this and the like nature, which affect a very extensive portion of the agricultural population of Ireland, is worthy the attention of Lord Devon and his brother Commissioners, and may attract the scrutinizing examination of Sir Edward Sugden, who has already swept away so many abuses in the practice of the court over which he presides with such advantage to the public.

But, in one way or another the grievance of rack-renting, total insecurity, and no community of feeling, must be alleviated or removed. Protection must be afforded to the labour and the enterprise of the tenant, as well as to the person and property of the landlord. Without such protection, what can be expected from the tenant, who sees as the

only result to him of the improvement of his farm, a corresponding accumulation of his rent, or a barbarous ejection from that holding to which his toil and his capital has given a value ? What benefit can the landlord hope to derive from letting his land at a rent which he knows it is impossible to realize : a rent of necessity accumulating in arrears, and held over his tenant, if for any purpose, to seize upon the few surplus sheaves which a bountiful Providence at intervals may bestow upon him, to diversify the wretchedness of his lot ? Change the system. Ensure to the tenant the fruits of his toil, and a fair return for his expenditure, by making at least provision for compensation, in the event of his tenure being disturbed, and the agitator will in vain invite him from the implements of husbandry, in which he sees a promise of reward, either to swell the coffers of avarice, or follow the car of profligate ambition.

Can any friend of Ireland hesitate to acknowledge the importance of these considerations ? Is there any man so besotted to party, as not to admit, that the present Government by attacking this subject, the root of every misfortune in Ireland, has placed itself a century in advance of the ephemeral patriots now so clamorous, but satisfied three years ago with the allurements of a gew-gaw viceroy, and made as quiet "an they were sucking doves," by the judicious disposition of a few paltry appointments. Who can now refrain from laughter, and hear Mr. Pigot or Mr. Moore calling "all the gods" to wit-

ness, that nothing can pacify Ireland but the return of Lord Normanby ? If, after so long a possession of power, the Irish Whigs—an anomalous race—were able to bequeath nothing to their successors but the agitation for Repeal, we may well doubt the efficacy of their panacea. How can the Whigs assail, with any justice, the tardiness of the present Minister, if tardy he has been, which is by no means admitted, when they reflect, that they themselves allowed ten years of power to pass, without one single effort being made even to approach the landlord and tenant question ? No doubt the most liberal system of prison discipline was adopted, most merchantable corporations were established, a poor law passed, and other great and philosophical designs—extending even beyond the elevation of Mr. This and Mr. That to the bench—were contemplated, although not given to the public ;* but yet Mr. O'Connell declares that justice for Ireland was as difficult to be had, and as distant under the Whig, as he would represent it to be under the present, Administration. The present Government at once avowed its intention to bring all the wisdom of the legislature to bear upon the improvement of the Irish peasantry. They have already entered, with every appearance of good faith and sincerity, upon the investigation ; and it cannot be that the people are so lost to

* The *Edinburgh Review* for the present month contains at least seventy pages of philosophical speculations upon Ireland—new speculations, perfectly new, for the use of Whigs out of office.

reason, so blind to their own interests, as to thwart or baffle those measures of practical relief concerting for their benefit.

Let not any one think that the system of agitation is too deep rooted in the habits of the people, to admit of cure, or that even if Mr. O'Connell was withdrawn from the busy scene in which he has moved, the "Repeal," or any other political delusion, would be continued by the Roman Catholic priesthood. It is a gross blunder to believe that the majority of that body are from choice committed to agitation. Many of them holding very moderate opinions, have been pushed forward by their more violent brethren ; but most of them have been coerced into the movement, in the hope of obtaining the redress of the real grievances of the peasantry. Here, too, is seen another fatal consequence of the social miseries of Ireland. The peasant appeals with confidence to the priest against the hard fate of his condition. The priest dares not to refuse his sympathy to the undoubted sufferings of the peasant. But it should not be thought that those miseries once alleviated, the Catholic clergy would desire to commit the Catholic religion to the protection of the wild and lawless democracy, which the separation of these kingdoms would inevitably call to power. There are amongst the Catholic priesthood of Ireland many yet surviving, who witnessed the horrors of the triumph of democracy in France, when "*les eveques a la lanterne*" became as popular a cry as the "*ça ira*"

was a song of the revolutionary party.* No ! The Catholic Priest is not the natural ally of disorder. In every other country in Europe he is attached by interest and inclination to the cause of Government. In Ireland alone, a struggle of forty years duration for religious liberty, and since that liberty was achieved, the hope of doing something for his impoverished flock, have held him in the ranks of agitation. For a time, they consider it their duty, and find it their interest to be ranged on the side of their misguided disciples, but these causes can only operate during a season of all but revolutionary turmoil. Political power is a possession natural to man's desire ; but the feeling of security and personal independence acts with more cogent and immediate effect. And are there not symptoms, in the fever under which Ireland has been suffering, which might make this security and independence of more importance to the Roman Catholic clergy, than even the sacrifice of their political power ?

Two years are not past since, throughout the western counties of Ireland, large masses of men were seen to parade the country in the open day, apparently under no leaders, but moved as by a common impulse, to meet and associate against the amount of dues payable to their clergy ; in fact, to establish a new *tariff*. Some very stormy

* Those horrors have been often described to the writer by a valued friend, a clergyman in the west of Ireland, who was only released from the apprehension of death by the fall of Robespierre.

debates occurred in this manner, between the priests and the people, and nothing appeared to remain for the former, except to divert the current into a wider channel. The agitation for the "Repeal" was at once adopted in those counties, where it had not been previously known. It was preached from every altar, advanced at every meeting, and for a time the clergy tariff, with all minor agitations, were forgotten in the struggle for the separation of these kingdoms.

Without insinuating, nay, even altogether disclaiming all charge against the Catholic Clergy on the subject of their dues, it may be presumed that a state of dependence, such as this petty warfare indicated, cannot be desirable to any body of educated men. But if we enter into the details of the present *voluntary system*, as it is called by a certain sort of Roman Catholics, we shall find abundant grounds for believing, that if it shall be thought advisable to create a state provision for the Roman Catholic Clergy, the measure, however openly opposed, would be acceptable to the Clergy themselves, and received with gratification as well by the masses of the people as by the educated Roman Catholics. For how is the revenue of the Catholic Priest raised? By confession dues, by marriage dues, baptism dues, mass dues, anointing dues, legacy dues,* Easter dues, Christmas dues, chapel dues, burial dues. In addition to these, the friar has his *quest*, the curate has his *quest*. That

* Sums paid by the relatives of any person dying out of his native parish.

is to say, when the money payments are exhausted, the friar, who has no regular subsistence, and the curate, who has very little,—frequently not more than twenty pounds a year,—go round the rural districts, collecting oats and other contributions in kind, for their support. How is it possible to suppose that any educated man, or any man fit to be entrusted with the education or control of the people, could submit to such degradation as this latter occupation requires? Does not Mr. O'Connell at once admit that he is applying himself to the prejudices of men, not raised above the lowest of their flocks, when he ventures on asking their assent to the continuance of such a system? But the dues which are raised in money payments do not confer one jot more independence. They are far from being voluntary contributions. They are received after many a hard bargain and remonstrance, many a disgraceful struggle and scandalous altercation.* They are collected in crowns, half-crowns, shillings, even halfpence, in the chapels, at the sick bed, on the high roads, anywhere. They are necessarily so collected, for though the peasant is the poorest in the civilized world, yet the priest cannot starve. He gets this miserable subsistence, which would not be paid a single day if he did

* At the Mayo Spring Assizes, 1843, two young men, the brothers of a Roman Catholic Priest, were tried for murder, found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. The quarrel was caused by the unfortunate deceased having refused to pay the full amount of dues to the brother of the prisoners.

not participate in all the prejudices of the people, and as a necessary consequence, the Catholic Priesthood,—if we exempt the bishops, and a few men of philosophical and literary attainments,*—are at this day a harsh, coarse, passionate, despotic, uneducated body of men. No gentleman of property or station in the country ever thinks of sending a son to Maynooth, and the few of that rank who enter the Church, attach themselves either to the Irish College at Rome, or some of the Jesuit establishments. The only remedy for this evil is a state provision for the Clergy, and we shall find that the proposition is by no means new in Ireland. It formed a part of Mr. Pitt's plan for the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, and then met the assent not only of the Catholic Bishops, but the Pope himself. In 1825, the House of Commons resolved, "That it is expedient that a provision should be made by law, towards the maintenance of the Roman Catholic Clergy in Ireland." In that same year, Mr. O'Connell, before a committee of the house, stated—

"I think a wise government would preserve the fidelity and attachment of the Catholic Clergy, by what I call *the golden link*, by *pecuniary provision*, so that the Government should be as secure, in all its movements, towards foreign powers, of the Catholic Clergy, as they now are of the Protestant Clergy; that they should be, in short, a portion of the subjects of the Government, and the state identified with them. *Our wish would be*, that the Govern-

* Mr. O'Malley, Mr. Miley, Mr. M'Gawley, Mr. Mahony (Father Prout) have distinguished themselves in science and literature.

"ment should have proper influence over them, *which a certain pecuniary connexion would give*. My opinion is, that "coupled with, or *following* emancipation, it would be acceptable, but not preceding it; and my humble opinion is, that "it would be a most desirable thing to have that species of "settlement take place *after* emancipation. The consequence "would be, that the Catholic Clergy would become, *in the nature of officers belonging to the Crown*, forwarding the views "of Government in every case where there was not something "that revolted in general, such as harsh or unconstitutional "illegal measures; but that the general tenor of their conduct "would be decidedly in support of the Government, and perhaps even in instances that theoretic friends of the constitution would not wish for."

Such were the words of Mr. O'Connell in 1825. Now he finds it his interest, and consequently considers it his duty, to declare that the Catholic Clergy do not, *never did*, and never will entertain the idea of a state provision, notwithstanding one other declaration of his in that year :—

"I have spoken upon the subject with the Gentlemen of the "Roman Catholic Church of Ireland: without pledging myself for all of them, I understand that their sentiments "*coincide entirely* with those which I have had the honor to "express. The late Catholic bishop of Kerry was a cousin-german of mine,—a man of very clear and distinct intellect. "He was anxious for that arrangement, and, I am sure, "anxious for it from the purest motives."

All this is now forgotten; but if at those different periods the measure was received with favor, it is not credible that the boon which would take the hands of the priest out of the pockets of the people, could be now pertinaciously rejected. It is an absurdity to think that any body of rational men would prefer an eleemosynary support, wrung

from wretched peasants in pence and halfpence, to a fixed stipend paid by the country, conferring personal independence without trenching upon religious freedom. But, if the clergy should resist this measure, the pressure of an impoverished people would force them to accept it, and we should soon see in the priesthood a class of liberal, enlightened, and educated Roman Catholics, the sons of the gentry who have been heretofore excluded, by the terror of personal degradation and dependence inseparable from the present most involuntary "voluntary system."

"There is," says Gustave De Beaumont, a distinguished French writer, "doubtless, an excess in the popular power of the Catholic priesthood in Ireland, which seems to require that it should be moderated. A salary given by the state to all members of this priesthood would have such a moderating influence. This salary being proportioned to that given to the Anglican and Presbyterian ministers, would attest the political equality of creeds. The Irish clergy, attached to the Irish people by the sympathy of a common creed, would not at the same time be emancipated from all connexion with public authority. Receiving a fixed income from the state, the priests would ask nothing from the poor and miserable people. It would be less popular but more independent; less free, perhaps, in its relations to power, but less fettered by the passions of party. *What could be the obstacles to this measure?*"*

Obstacles there will be to this or any other measure which a firm government may undertake for the amelioration of Ireland. Obstacles, or

* "Ireland, social, political, and religious," by Gustave De Beaumont, vol. 2, p. 262.

rather outcry may be raised by those gentlemen, who think the present Government has forfeited all principle, in not proposing the repeal of the Emancipation Act, or the re-enactment of the penal code. Again, they whose power, and wealth, and gratified ambition depend upon the discontent of the country, will oppose any measure, which by giving the Roman Catholic priesthood an interest in the preservation of order and the Union, would render Ireland prosperous and contented. But all right thinking Protestants in these kingdoms have outlived the dread of such a provision. They have lived to smile at the terrors of Popery, which startled them at the commencement of this century, and made the Emancipation Act appear a tremendous experiment, and every respectable educated Roman Catholic, no less than the independent Protestant, desires to see the ministers of the Roman Catholic religion emancipated from their present state of abject dependence upon the lowest classes of the people.

Whether this object is to be accomplished by an agreement with the Catholic clergy, which at the present moment, except through the intervention of Rome, would be almost impossible, or by simply making a statutable provision, vesting the money in a board appointed by parliament for its distribution, and informing all officiating clergymen, that their drafts would be honored annually to a certain amount—a plan which, however simple,

could not fail of success*—amongst the Roman Catholic gentry will be found not the least determined supporters of the measure. They have long felt the necessity of raising, by every means in their power, the dignity and intellectual character of their clergy. They see daily their religion prostituted, and made subservient to every political design. They feel that they are more or less degraded, by the uncouth, unformed, and unpresentable character of their spiritual advisers. They behold the ministers of a creed which they revere, emerging from a six or seven years' retreat in the obscure village of Maynooth;† expert it may be, though even for this we have but few examples, in all the *carte* and *tierce* of controversial discussion, perhaps deeply read in the Councils of the church, but utterly unacquainted with the learning and letters which tend to liberalize the mind, and become the more necessary in proportion as the business of life is conversant with the more abstruse and ascetic inquiries. Such contemplations must be indeed painful to any member of the Roman Catholic persuasion, who has learned the history of his church, not in the struggle “never ending, still beginning” of this fanaticism, half political, half religious, peculiar to our times and country; but in

* Who has not seen the bold child refuse the cake which is pressed upon him? Leave it in his way, and when unnoticed, he devours it.

† The College should never have been fixed at Maynooth. The publicity and society of Dublin would have refined the character of the Institution.

the records of those days, when kings and nations found in the church the greatest statesmen of their age,—when the highest triumphs of the arts were accomplished under the protection of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy,—when their pulpits rung with the eloquence of a Bossuet, a Massillon, and a hundred others, and later still, and nearer home, when the power, the genius, the piety and pure patriotism of a Doyle* were exerted to restore content, the sure forerunner of prosperity to his unhappy country.

If these subjects,—rapidly, it may be feebly, but at least honestly sketched,—shall receive, whenever the government is prepared to bring them forward with the authority of the state, a fair consideration from the people, the condition of Ireland will be speedily improved, and her unbounded resources rapidly developed. But to enable the government to give their attention effectually to such designs, they are entitled to require from their followers much magnanimity and public spirit, a real subordination of interest to duty, and a candid and regulated consideration of their entire policy. In vain will the most powerful government attempt to bestow lasting benefits upon this country, whilst their best intentions are wilfully misrepresented, or recklessly assailed. Parties in the state, and especially that section which boasts,—with

* “See the “Pastoral to Ribbonmen”—“Letter on the Union of the Churches.” Doctor Doyle never joined the agitation for the Repeal of the Union, although he lived to June, 1834.

what truth we need not enquire,—that it contributed to elevate to power the present administration, must make without hesitation any sacrifice, to ensure the discomfiture of the common enemy, and consolidate the Union of the kingdoms. When feelings and sentiments such as these take the place of the selfish and unruly passions heretofore too prevalent ; when Catholics as well as Protestants of moderate opinions, encouraged by the determination of the Government to dispense equal justice to all, shall unite for the public good ; when disciplined ambition shall supersede that craving for place, which pervades and poisons the entire frame of Irish society, then will the hands of the Government be free to act upon the miseries which demoralize and distract the country.

To achieve a victory over the disorders of Ireland is a work certain to win lasting fame for an enlightened minister. It is a task worthy the distinguished nobleman at the head of the Irish Government. Already both he and his advisers have exhibited a spirit of moderation combined with firmness, which has dismayed and disorganized the enemies of an united empire. At the same moment, the Government of Lord De Grey has manifested a firm resolve to rescue the country from its own wild passions, and created a tribunal before which the deluded people can bring in detail their real grievances, with a perfect certainty of redress. On the one side, the laws are vindicated ; on the other, the Minister and the Legislature are prepared at the earliest moment,

to remove all just grounds of complaint. Happy will Ireland be, if permitted to second the efforts of those who are thus planning her improvement. Then indeed might the present generation live to see her become what Scotland is ; Scotland, pauperised, wretched, bankrupt, before her Act of Union, but now converted, by the enterprise and capital of England, into a rich and flourishing kingdom ; her mountains cultivated, her manufactures created, her commerce increased fifty-fold, and the noise of the shuttle and the loom heard where once resounded only the clash of the claymore, or the wild cry of Celtic independence.

——— Sic fortis Etruria crevit ;
Scilicet ac rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.

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